

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

**Please amend the claims of the above-identified application as follows so as to place the same in condition for allowance, or at least in better form for Appeal, pursuant to 37 CFR 1.116:**

1. Canceled, without prejudice
2. Canceled, without prejudice
3. Canceled, without prejudice
4. Canceled, without prejudice
5. Canceled, without prejudice
6. (Currently Amended) An image processing apparatus including a storing unit for storing image data and performing an output process based on the image data stored in the storing unit, comprising a controller including:

means for designating image data stored in the storing unit, and accepting an instruction for concealment of the designated image data,

means for detecting whether or not a processing unit for processing the image data is provided and an operation state thereof,

means for deciding that the concealing method is to set authenticating information to the image data in the case where it is detected that the processing unit is provided and active, and for deciding that the concealing method is to encrypt the image data and to set authentication information in the case where it is detected that the processing unit is not provided and or is not active,

means for concealing the designated image data by the decided concealing method based on the accepted instruction, and means for nullifying image data which is not designated by repeatedly overwriting the data which is not designated with meaningless data whereby the undesignated image data is prevented from recurring in said storing unit in reproducible form.

7. Canceled, without prejudice

8. Canceled, without prejudice

9.(Previously Presented) The image processing apparatus according to claim 6, wherein the controller includes means for decoding encrypted image data in the case of performing an output operation based on the image data.

10. (Previously Presented) The image processing apparatus according to claim 6, wherein the controller further comprises:  
means for accepting authentication information;  
means for verifying the authentication information set to the image data with the accepted authentication information; and  
means for permitting the output process of the image data in the case where the authentication information set to the image data matches the accepted authentication information.

11. (Previously Presented) The image processing apparatus according to claim 9, wherein the controller further comprises:

means for accepting authentication information;

means for verifying the authentication information set to the image data with the accepted authentication information; and

means for permitting the output process of the image data in the case where the authentication information set to the image data matches the accepted authentication information.

12. Canceled, without prejudice

13. Canceled, without prejudice

14. Canceled, without prejudice

15. Canceled, without prejudice

16. Canceled, without prejudice

17. Canceled, without prejudice